

Message Text

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SUBJ: PRESS COMMENT ON US-MEXICAN PRISONER EXCHANGE

1. EL HERALDO, PROMINENT BAJA CALIFORNIA PAPER WHICH HAS FOLLOWED PRISONER ISSUE WITH CONSIDERABLE INTEREST, REACTED NOVEMBER 8 TO UPCOMING PRISONER EXCHANGE TREATY WITH TWO FRONT-PAGE ARTICLES BOTH UNDER HEADLINE "MEXICAN JAILS WILL NOT ACCEPT MEXICAN PRISONERS WHO ARE IN THE US." ANOTHER FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE NOVEMBER 9 REPORTS THAT MAJORITY OF AMERICAN PRISONERS WISH RETURN TO US.

2. ONE BRIEF ARTICLE NOVEMBER 8 REPORTS CONCERN OF JESUS MEDINA FUENTES, DIRECTOR OF LA MESA STATE PRISON, THAT PRISONER EXCHANGE WILL FURTHER EXACERBATE PRESENT SERIOUS OVERCROWDING AT LA MESA. HE FORESAW RECEIVING 100 MEXICANS IN EXCHANGE FOR 50 AMERICANS AND LAMENTED THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHERE HE WOULD PUT THEM.

3. SECOND, LENGTHY NOVEMBER 8 ARTICLE REPORTS STATEMENT OF ONE GERARDO CHACON JAVIER, IDENTIFIED AS CALIFORNIA IMMIGRATION LAWYER AND SPOKESMAN OF ASSOCIATION OF LAWYERS OF THE AMERICAN COURT, THAT MEXICO IS AT A DISADVANTAGE WITH US IN EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS. MEXICO WOULD SUFFER MORE HUMILIATION, HE SAID, FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

(1) OF 66 MEXICANS IN US JAILS, 60 PERCENT ARE RESIDENT IN US AND
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WOULD REFUSE TO GO TO MEXICAN PRISONS; (2) FURTHER FIVE PERCENT

WHO ARE JAILED ON DRUG CHARGES WILL OPT STAY IN US SINCE SENTENCES ARE FOR ONLY SIX MONTHS; (3) REMAINING 25 PERCENT ARE ILLEGALS WHO HAVE BEEN SENTENCED FROM 2 TO 5 YEARS; (4) US IS ASKING FOR RETURN OF 1000 US CITIZENS WHO ARE IN MEXICAN PRISONS; (5) ON ENTERING US THESE 1000 WILL SEEK LIBERTY THROUGH COURT ACTION AND WITH GOOD DEFENSE WILL BE ABLE TO GET IT; (6) US WILL TURN OVER ILLEGALS DISGUISED AS DRUG TRAFFICKERS. US WILL SEEK ANY WAY POSSIBLE TO DELIVER PRISONERS IN ORDER TO COMPLETE THE EXCHANGE AND SINCE THERE IS NOT SUFFICIENT "MATERIAL" IN JAILS, IT WILL USE ILLEGALS.

4. NOVEMBER 9 ARTICLE, BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH PRISONERS, REPORTS THAT MAJORITY WISH RETURN TO US EITHER BECAUSE US JAIL CONDITIONS BETTER OR BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE MORE LIKELY OBTAIN EARLY RELEASE THERE. SEVERAL PRISONERS COMMENTED ON GREATER PERSONAL FREEDOM IN MEXICAN JAILS AS CONTRASTED TO US, AND ONE CITED CONJUGAL VISITS AS REASON WHY HE WOULD PREFER REMAIN IN MEXICAN JAIL.

5. COMMENT: OUR OWN EXPERIENCE GIVES CREDENCE TO CONCERN AND VIEWS DESCRIBED PARAS 2 AND 4. AS FOR ARTICLE CITED PARA 3, WE OFFER SUMMARY PRIMARILY AS EXAMPLE OF SENSITIVITY TO EXCHANGE IN THIS AREA AND AS TASTE OF WHAT MEXICAN READERS ARE EXPOSED TO. REMARKS ABOUT US USE OF ILLEGALS, HOWEVER, STRIKES AS PARTICULARLY NASTY PIECE OF WRITING. WOULD BE USEFUL IN OUR DEALINGS WITH PUBLIC AND OFFICIALDOM IF DEPARTMENT AT SOME FUTURE TIME WOULD MAKE AVAILABLE EITHER DIRECTLY TO US OR AS PART OF PUBLIC PACKAGE OF PRISONER EXCHANGE DOCUMENTS WITH DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF CATEGORIES OF MEXICANS - AND AMERICANS - TO BE EXCHANGED.
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